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*The Spirit of Persecutors exemplified;*

AND

*The Conduct to be observed towards their  
Descendants.*

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S E R M O N,

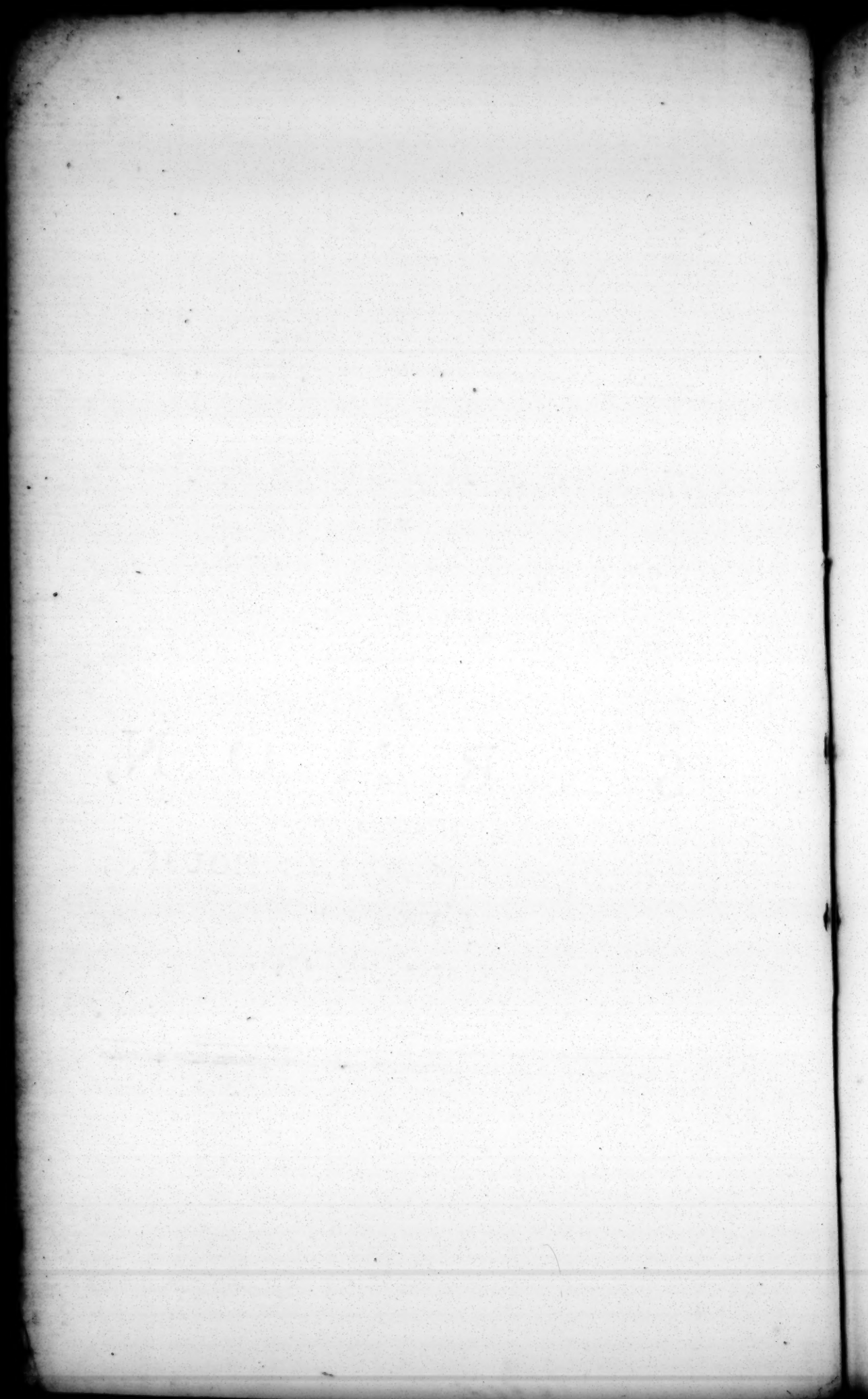
DELIVERED AT

GEORGE'S MEETING-HOUSE,

EXETER,

NOVEMBER 5th, 1795

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*The Conduct to be observed towards their  
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A

S E R M O N,

DELIVERED AT

GEORGE'S MEETING-HOUSE,

EXETER,

NOVEMBER 5th, 1791.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE CAUSES OF  
THE LATE RIOTS AT BIRMINGHAM.

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By T. KENRICK.

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EXETER,

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## P R E F A C E.

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**M**Y Design in writing the following Discourse was, to point out a few Examples of the dreadful Evils which have been produced in the Christian World by the intolerant Spirit of the Church of Rome, and to shew how inconsistent both the Practice and the Principles of Persecution are with the Genius of Christianity. I have been induced to think, that the Publication of it also would not be unseasonable at the present Time, when the same Spirit has discovered itself among Protestants, as the Picture here exhibited may serve to shew them whose Example they are following, and to what Consequences their Conduct will lead; two Circumstances of which they seem not to be aware. In order that the Reference which the Facts noticed in the Sermon have to the late Occurrences may be better understood, I shall in this Place state what these Occurrences were, and endeavour to trace them to their Origin.

It is well known, that in the Year 1787 the Protestant Dissenters applied to Parliament for the Repeal of the Test Laws, so far as they were affected by them; considering it as a Grievance that ought not to be borne in Silence any longer, to be pronounced by the Laws of their Country bad Citizens, and unworthy of public Confidence.

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But

But they were well aware that, however reasonable their Pretensions to Redress might be, the immediate Repeal of Laws, which had been in Force for more than a Century, was not to be expected. Mr. Beaufoy's Motion for going into a Committee of the whole House of Commons, to take the Subject into Consideration, was accordingly rejected by a considerable Majority, as had been foreseen, the Numbers being 178 to 100. A strong Conviction of the Justice of their Cause, and an Apprehension of the growing Liberality of the Times, joined to the favourable Impression which the Arguments of the Advocates for the Repeal had evidently made upon the House, when the Subject was discussed, induced them to renew their Application in the Year 1789, with better Hopes of Success. Nor did the Event wholly disappoint their Expectations; for although the Motion for going into a Committee was again lost, it was by a Majority of *twenty* only; the Numbers upon the Division being 102 for the Motion, and 122 against it. On this Occasion it appeared, that while the Friends of religious Liberty continued to support the Cause they had first espoused, many of their Adversaries had given up their Opposition, and that the rest maintained it with less Acrimony. Nothing seemed therefore wanting for a successful Issue to the Application of the Dissenters in the House of Commons, but a more careful Examination of their Claims, supported by a more general Declaration of their Sentiments upon the Subject. Public Meetings of Protestant Dissenters were held for this Purpose in various Parts of the Kingdom, at which they expressed a just Sense of the Grievance under which they laboured, by several Resolutions, drawn up in firm but respectful and temperate Language, accompanied also with warm Expressions of Attachment to the Family

mily upon the Throne, and to the civil Constitution of their Country. From the Reasonableness of their Claims, and the Unanimity which prevailed among Protestant Dissenters of all Denominations in representing them, there appeared to be the best Ground to expect that they would not again be rejected, at least by one Branch of the Legislature. It was resolved, therefore, to bring them again before Parliament in the Year 1790.

But a third Party now openly interfered in this Business, which had been secretly at work before, and which thought it Time to throw off the Mask, and to act without Disguise: A Power which once plunged the Kingdom into the Horrors of a civil War by its Oppressions, which has generally been animated with peculiar Rancour against those who have not bowed to its Authority, and whose Operations have almost uniformly been unfriendly to Liberty, civil and religious (except when its own peculiar Privileges were attacked), and frequently accompanied with Violence; I mean the great Body of the Clergy of the established Church.\* Alarmed at the Impression which the Arguments of the Dissenters seemed to make upon the Mind of the Public, and at the Prospect of Success in their Application to Parliament, which they had evident Reason to entertain, they resolved to employ all their Influence, and to try every Expe-

\* From this Charge against the general Body of the Clergy I except many Individuals, both in the present and former Times, whose Wishes and Conduct have been widely different from those of the Majority of their Brethren, and who have acquired to themselves peculiar Honour, by maintaining an Example of Moderation, in a Situation which exposes Men to the strongest Temptations to the contrary Behaviour. Nor would I be understood to insinuate any Thing against the *general* good Character of those, whose Conduct, in respect to Subjects of this Nature, I condemn. Many of the Enemies of Liberty, I am persuaded are good Men. This is an Observation, however, which applies to Persecutors of every Age, and of every Persuasion.



dient to defeat their Views. Not satisfied with publishing or reprinting many anonymous Pamphlets, full of virulent Invectives against the Dissenters, calculated to inflame the Passions of Men, and which the Clergy, even in the Height of their Zeal, would have been ashamed to acknowledge as their own; public Assemblies of the Ministers of the established Church were called, in order to counteract the Design of those held by the Dissenters. At these Meetings they call the Union of the Protestant Dissenters, to obtain a Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, “an alarming Confederacy;” and profess to consider “their present Attempt as a Thirst after Power, and replete with Alarm to every Friend of the established Church, as well as the civil Constitution.” They therefore “invite and conjure their Brethren in all Parts of the Kingdom, as they value the Blessings, civil and religious, of the British Constitution, and would transmit them entire to their Posterity, to co-operate with them, with Firmness and Vigour, in a common Cause.” When this Language, and much more of the same Kind, is held respecting the Views and Characters of the Dissenters, by several Hundreds of the Clergy, in the City of London, in the Archdeaconries of York, Chester, and Cleveland; when the same Language is repeated at several County Meetings, and Meetings of Cities and Corporations, called by the Desire or at the Instigation of the Clergy; when it is delivered solemnly from the Pulpit, with fresh Proofs of Danger, and fresh Motives for Alarm, can it appear surprising if the Minds of the Members of the Establishment should be inflamed? The Passions of Churchmen, who had before viewed this Controversy with Indifference, were now raised to the highest Pitch of Terror and Resentment.

When

When the Question was carried against Mr. Fox's Motion, they could not help testifying their Satisfaction by public Rejoicings in the remotest Parts of the Kingdom. A signal Victory over the public Enemy, when threatening the Nation with the Loss of its Liberty and Independence, would not have afforded them greater Joy than this Triumph over Reason and Justice, in rejecting the equitable Demands of their fellow Subjects.

And what could be the apprehended Evil, which induced the Clergy to sound so violent an Alarm upon the present Occasion? Was the Protestant Faith about to be suppressed? By no Means. The Change which was meditated would have strengthened its Interests, by uniting Protestants among themselves. Were the Ceremonies of the Church about to be exposed to Derision or Contempt? Just the contrary. A Plan was formed for rescuing a solemn Ordinance of the Church from notorious Prostitution and Abuse, and for confining it to those religious Purposes for which it was first instituted. The Guilt of this Prostitution and Abuse the Clergy have now taken entirely upon themselves. Were the Temporalities of the Church about to be wrested from her, or to be shared with Strangers? No. The Bishop of Durham would have had his Ten Thousand a Year, the Archbishop of Canterbury his Twenty Thousand; and every Bishop, Dean, Chancellor, Archdeacon, Canon, Prebend, with whatever other Officer of high or low Degree there may be in the Church, would have enjoyed his Dignity and his Income, without the smallest Diminution of the one or Degradation of the other. Nothing further was intended, or could have been effected, by the Repeal of the Test Laws, than rendering Dissenters eligible to *civil* Employments, without receiving the Lord's Supper

per according to the Rites of the Church of England, or according to the Rites of any other Church, as a Qualification for enjoying them. No other Benefit could have arisen to the Dissenters from this Change, than enabling them to share with the Members of the Establishment in the executive Offices of Government, when invested with them by the Crown, or by the Voice of their Fellow Citizens. What Motive then could the Clergy have for interfering in this Business? Not the Apprehension of Danger to the Church: For it exceeds the Power of Imagination to conceive, how any such Consequence could arise from the Possession of civil Offices, which they were bound to administer according to the Laws, and which none but Members of their own Communion could confer upon them. This, although the ostensible, was not the real Motive for their Interference, but it was Pride and Envy. There must be no Way to Preferment in the State but by kneeling at their Altars. If a despised *Secſtary*, not educated in the Bosom of the Church, should be declared a useful Member of the Community; if he should have the Honour of carrying the Staff of Office before the Judges of Assize, or of sitting upon the Bench administering Justice in the Company of other Justices of the Peace; the mortifying Spectacle cannot be endured by a haughty Priest. To preserve himself from it, he sets up the "false and wicked Cry" that the Church is in Danger. (Let not the Expressions be thought harsh: They are the Words of a learned Judge and noble Peer of this Kingdom, when speaking from the Seat of Justice.\*) Others, of less Discernment, believe his pretended Fears to be well founded,

\* See Lord Loughborough's Charge to the Grand Jury of the County of Surry, at the Trial of the Rioters in 1780, in the Ann. Reg. for that Year.



and are really alarmed. Thus the Cry circulates from the superior Clergy to the inferior, from the Clergy to the higher Classes of Society, and from them to the Multitude.

When his Lordship calls this Cry *wicked*, he evidently refers not merely to its being *false*, but to the wicked Purposes for which it has always been employed. In the Reign of Charles the Second it was the Instrument made use of for procuring those cruel Laws to be enacted against the Dissenters of that Day, by which so many worthy Men were harrassed and ruined: The Repeal of which Laws, at the Revolution, he calls a just and humane Indulgence. In the Reign of Queen Anne the Cry was again sounded, to defeat the Protestant Succession, and to prepare the Way for the Restoration of the arbitrary Family of the Stuarts. On which Occasion it was followed by the Destruction of the Dwelling-Houses and Places of Worship of Protestant Dissenters; not because they had employed or were disposed to use Violence against the Church of England; but because they were known to be the steady Enemies of arbitrary Power, and of the Jacobite Interest. It was renewed a few Years afterwards, from the same Motives, at the Accession of George the First, and attended with the like Consequences—Riots, and the Destruction of Meeting-Houses. From this Time there passed a long Period of Tranquility, till that memorable Effect of the same pretended Alarm for the Security of the established Religion, which is within every one's Recollection, the Riots of the Metropolis in 1780; produced, not indeed by the Clergy, (which is rather extraordinary, considering that they were the prime Agents on every former Occasion) but by other artful Men, who raised the Passions of the People by this Clamour, in order to accomplish  
their

their own wicked Designs. The Objects of the Fury of the Populace at this Period were another Class of Dissenters, to whom Parliament had just restored some of those Rights of which they had long been unjustly deprived. With so recent an Example of the dreadful Consequences arising from this Cry before their Eyes, the Clergy of the Church of England had Recourse to it again, as the last Resource against the Dissenters, upon their third Application to Parliament for the Repeal of the Test Laws; and it fully answered their Purpose. The public Mind was too much agitated for the House of Commons to venture upon any Alteration of the Laws in Favour of the Dissenters. Although the Fears of Churchmen were thus removed for the present, yet the Animosity excited against the supposed Cause of these Fears remained in full Force, and only wanted a slight Pretext for manifesting itself by Acts of the greatest Violence.

Such a Pretext soon offered. At Birmingham, where the Passions of the People had been greatly inflamed by the general Alarm which the Clergy had before sounded, and which had been repeated with additional Vehemence in the Discourses of their own Ministers from the Pulpit, Occasion was taken from a Meeting held on the Fourteenth of July, in the following Year, by Churchmen and Dissenters together, to commemorate the French Revolution (an Event in which it is the Duty of every Friend to human Nature to rejoice), to represent it as a Combination formed among Dissenters for overturning the Church and civil Government. This Intimation from their Superiors was sufficient for the Populace. A riotous Mob, with the Cry of *Church and King*, assembled about the House where the Company had dined, with a View to insult their Persons; but finding they were

were dispersed, they proceeded to destroy two Meeting-Houses; in one of which (Dr. Priestley's) they committed to the Flames an excellent Library of Books, which had been provided for the Use of the Congregation in general, but more especially of the young People. From hence they hastened to Dr. Priestley's Residence, about a Mile from Birmingham, with the Resolution of taking away his Life if they could lay their Hands upon him; but being disappointed in this Purpose by the Vigilance of his Friends, who had warned him of his Danger, and furnished him with the Means of Escape a short Time before the Mob arrived, they expressed great Chagrin at this Disappointment, and vented their Fury with greater Violence upon his Furniture, Library, Manuscripts, Philosophical Instruments, and Laboratory, almost every Article of which they demolished. They afterwards committed the like Violences at the Houses of the Dissenters in the Town of Birmingham, and the Neighbourhood, who were most conspicuous for their Wealth or their public Spirit; always taking Care to mark their Course by the Destruction of Books, which seem to have been the peculiar Objects of their Vengeance. What further Devastation they would have committed, if they had not been interrupted by the Arrival of the Military, it is impossible to say. It is probable, however, they would not have desisted until they had plundered or demolished the House of every Dissenter of Note in the Place. The same Spirit which actuated the riotous Multitude upon this Occasion appears to have perverted the Minds of Men who would not be pleased to find themselves ranked with the Populace. It prevented the Magistrates of the Place, the appointed Guardians of the

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Peace



Peace, from taking the Methods which the Law requires, and which their Character afforded them, for suppressing the Tumult upon its first Appearance; by which Neglect it soon acquired a Strength, which nothing was afterwards able to withstand. It could induce the Jurors, to whom the Trial of the Rioters was referred, consisting in a very great Proportion of the Inhabitants of Birmingham, to declare those innocent who were convicted of the Crimes laid to their Charge by the fullest and clearest Evidence. §

Such are the Evils which have arisen from this false and wicked Cry, that the Church is in Danger, first begun by the Clergy in order to prevent the Repeal of the Test Laws, and afterwards believed and repeated upon their Authority by Men who had no Inclination or no Opportunity to examine whether it were well founded. Mr. Baron Perryn “ cannot refrain from expressing his Wonder and Astonishment, that when all religious “ Persecution had ceased, and when Toleration “ had extended to all, such a Period should have “ been chosen for the Commission of every Species of Violence and Desolation.” \* But his Lordship would have ceased to wonder at the new

§ See “ The Report of the Trials of the Rioters.” It appears, that in some of the Trials *nine* out of *twelve* of the Jurymen were Inhabitants of Birmingham, and in no Case less than *six*. In Consequence of which those Persons were constituted Judges, who might be regarded as Parties in the Offence. How this could arise, if the 24th of George II. was observed, which orders the Array of Jurors in criminal Cases to be taken from the County at large, and not from the Hundred in which the Offence is committed, it is difficult to conceive. If the *Letter* of the Statute was not violated by the Person upon whom the civil Administration of the County was devolved, or by the under Officer, the *Spirit* of the Law, which is framed to guard against partial Juries, was not in this Instance attended to.

\* See his Charge to the Grand Jury in “ The Authentic Account of the Riots at Birmingham,” p. 14.

and atrocious Crimes which appeared in the Calendar, if he had reflected upon what the Clergy had been doing, and others under their Direction, the preceding Year, to inflame the Minds of Churchmen against Dissenters. In those Transactions he would have discovered an adequate Cause of those Violences, for which he did not know how to account. By their Clamours they had awakened in the Breasts of Members of their Church a Degree of Rancour against their Fellow Christians, who separate from it, which had not appeared for many Years; which instigated them to burn the Houses and demolish the Furniture of unoffending, peaceable, and worthy Citizens; to destroy a Library and Philosophical Apparatus, not exceeded by the Collections of any other Individual in the Kingdom; to hunt, with brutal Ferocity, for the Life of one of the ablest Men and most eminent Philosophers now in Europe, whose Labours, in the Opinion of Foreigners, have reflected Honour, not only upon himself, but upon the Age and Country in which he lives.

To the *Guilty* the Humanity of Englishmen induces them to shew Pity, even when suffering the just Punishment of the Laws. To distinguished Merit, all Men in any Degree civilized are willing to pay a Tribute of Respect, although it be accompanied with many Errors and Failings. But religious Zeal had here stifled all Sentiments of Pity, all Sense of Justice. The Actors in this Scene rejoiced in the Pains they inflicted, in Proportion to the Eminence of the Sufferer; and Thousands who beheld the Outrage, or heard of it in various Parts of the Kingdom, joined with them in the Triumph. Generous Minds may sometimes be led astray for a Moment by the Contagion of a popular Ferment, but a little Re-

fection brings them back to juster Sentiments. What then shall we say of that Zeal for the Service of the Church, which could induce twelve Men, chosen to the sacred Office of administering Justice, to deliver a solemn Verdict, in the Face of the Kingdom, in direct Violation of their Oath, which bound them to decide according to Evidence!

Is there nothing of the persecuting Spirit of Popery in all this? Did Zeal for the Church of Rome triumph over the Love of Justice and the Feelings of Humanity? Has it led Men to regard Calumny, Perjury, Robbery, and Murder, as meritorious Actions, when performed for the Benefit of the Church? So has Zeal for the Church of England.—Has that occasioned bloody Statutes to be enacted against those who have protested against its Doctrines and Authority? This has prevented the Execution of Laws framed for the Protection of Dissenters, which comes to the same Thing. It may offend Churchmen to be told, that Members of their Community are actuated by the same furious Zeal which disgraced the Cause of Popery in former Times; and it may alarm those to hear this asserted who are conscious that they are exposed to its Violence: But some of the Facts mentioned in the following Pages, from the Histories of Popish Persecutions, will shew, that there is too much Reason for observing a strong Resemblance between them in many Particulars. It cannot, therefore, be improper, that either the one or the other should be made acquainted with the true State of Things, that they may draw from them such Inferences as may suit their respective Situations.

Some Persons may, perhaps, think, that Dissenters ought to bear in *Silence* whatever Evils the  
Bigotry



Bigotry of their Adversaries may inflict upon them; or that, if they be ever noticed, it should be with the utmost Tenderneſs, and in the ſoſteſt Language, as being the moſt agreable to the Spirit of Chriſtianity: And it is true, that our Religion requires us to love even our Enemies, and to endure with Meekneſs and Patience the greateſt Injuries: But while there are ſuch Things among Men as Injuſtice and Oppreſſion, Chriſtianity cannot require us to be inſenſible of their Enormity, or prohibit us from expreſſing our Sentiments of them with juſt Indignation. If thoſe who ſuffer on Account of their religious Sentiments ſhould be unwilling to expoſe to the World the Conduct of their Perſecutors, leſt the Bitterneſs of their Sufferings ſhould infuſe an improper Portion of Aſperity into their Representations, the ſame Reaſons ought not to reſtrain others from doing it, who have no perſonal Injury to complain of, and who can be influenced only by a Deſire of rendering Juſtice to the Oppreſſed, and of preventing a Repetition of the like Exceſſes towards the ſame or other Perſons. It is poſſible indeed, that ſuch Animadverſions may furniſh our Adverſaries with an Excuse for continuing the ſame violent and injurious Behaviour.\* But whatever

\* “ So abſurdly do ſome Men reaſon, that this Temper, thus provoked and created, has been urged as an Argument for upholding the Cauſe. The Clergy, forgetting the Precepts of the meek Author of their Religion, claim a Merit in abſtaining from more active Perſecution, take Praise that they do not re-light the Fires of Smithfield, and, with the Language of Charity in their Mouths, but with the moſt unchriſtian Rancour in their Hearts, repreſent Proſcription from the common Rights of Citizenſhip as no Injury. They affect to juſtify their Injuſtice, and in their Turn to complain that *their Indulgence* to tender Conſciences is ill received; and that thoſe who are not contented with *their Permiſſion* to live unmoleſted in our common Country, prove themſelves unworthy the Rights of Citizens.” Rous’s Anſw. to Burke’s Appeal, p. 43, 44.

may be the immediate Effect, they will tend to render *their* Conduct, and the Conduct of Persecutors in general, odious in the End. By palliating and excusing their unjustifiable Outrages against our Brethren, we might hope to obtain a little present Favour; but as it must be procured at the Expence of Truth and Justice, it could only serve ultimately to increase the Violence of that Torrent, which, if it be not speedily and vigorously withstood, will overwhelm us all.†

In Answer to the Charge brought against the Clergy of the Church of England, of being the Occasion of the late Violences, by their Language at public Meetings and upon other Occasions, it may be said, that they have always admitted the Propriety of granting to Dissenters a complete Toleration; and therefore it might be fairly inferred, that they entirely disapproved of the Conduct of those who offered Violence to their Persons or Property. But, if they are so earnest as they profess to be, in wishing that the Protestant Dissenters may enjoy a complete Toleration, let them now shew as much Forwardness to preach against the active Persecution of those who separate from the Church, as they have shewn to inculcate the Necessity of negative Discouragements; let them call public Meetings of their Body a second Time, to condemn Proceedings

† “ Mr. Martin, although a Dissenting Minister, opposed the Repeal of the Test Act. For this Service he has been considerably “ carested by certain Bishops, who have condescended to notice and “ to visit him.” See Hall’s Answ. to Clayton’s Sermon, p. 62, Note. Mr. Clayton, by preaching a Sermon in Justification of the Birmingham Rioters, may hope for the same Distinction. That a Man who has been *educated* in the established Church should not understand the Principles of that Class of People with whom he has thought proper to associate himself, or that he should retain a Predilection for his former Connections, is not surprising.

which

which have originated in a Misapprehension of their Meaning; let them use all their Endeavours, in private as well as public, to stop the Progress of an Evil which they have inadvertently and innocently occasioned: We shall then, and not before, believe their Professions to be sincere. But if we observe them entirely silent upon the Subject of religious Liberty, when it is so grossly violated; if we hear not a Word of Censure pronounced in public upon the Conduct of Men who are professedly the Champions of the Church; we shall find too much Reason to suspect that the Clergy, in opposing the Repeal of the Test Laws, affected a Moderation which they did not feel, in order to obtain the Concurrence of others in their Views, and that they secretly rejoice in the Mischief which has been produced, *regarding the Outrages of Banditti as a wholesome Supplement to the Laws.\**

They have succeeded for the present in defeating the Purposes of the Dissenters; but whether the Means they have adopted to accomplish this Object will tend to the Establishment or the Overthrow of the Church, Time will discover. Sensible and moderate Laymen of their own Communion begin to see the Folly and Danger of supporting a System which can be maintained only by Injustice. “ Even I, says Mr. Rous, p. 43) a Churchman and Friend to “ Establishments, do not hesitate to say, if the

\* “ A Right Reverend Prelate sounds the Trump of civil Discord; and while an ignorant Multitude pursue without Mercy and plunder without Remorse, pious Pastors from their Pulpits insult the Justice of their Country in the Presence of her Judges, by treating the Outrages of Banditti, as a wholesome Supplement to her Laws.” Rous, p. 41, 42.



( xvi )

“ Clergy will combine their Safety with In-  
“ justice to others, let Establishments perish.  
“ Establishments are useful : Justice is necessary  
“ to the Wellbeing of Society.”

A SERMON,

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S E R M O N, &c.

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DEUT. XXIV. 16.

*The Fathers shall not be put to Death for the Children ; neither shall the Children be put to Death for the Fathers : Every Man shall be put to Death for his own Sin.*

**A**S the Design of observing this Day is to commemorate our Deliverance from an atrocious Plot, which originated in the Maxim, that Injustice and Violence are lawful, when employed in Support of a good Cause, I shall set before you several other Examples of the pernicious Effects of this baneful Principle, which have occurred in the History of the Church of Rome : I shall then enquire how far the Conduct of those who have been concerned in these Transactions corresponds with the Precepts of Christianity ; and point out the Manner, in which the Descendants of those Persons ought to be treated by us at the present Day.

The first Victims of the bloody Spirit of the Church of Rome, at the Dawn of the Reformation, were John Hufs and Jerome of Prague, who, having imbibed some of the Sentiments of Wickliffe the English Reformer, were summoned to

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appear

appear before the Council of Constance, there to answer for their Heresy. They refused, however, to obey the Summons, until they had obtained from the Emperor Sigismund a safe Conduct for their Journey to Constance, and for their Return to their own Country. Relying upon this Security, they made their Appearance and their Defence, which gave so little Satisfaction to the Council, that they were both condemned to be burnt alive. The principal Crime, for which they suffered this dreadful Punishment, was inveighing against the exorbitant Power and Riches of the Clergy ; for it appears, that John Hufs believed the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, and allowed of the Worship of Images, two of the most corrupt Tenets of the Church of Rome ; yet, because he condemned the Usurpations and Vices of the Clergy, this Council made no Scruple of violating the safe Conduct granted by the Emperor, and their own Promise of Protection, made in order to draw him to Constance. \*

The great Hero of Reformation, Martin Luther, escaped from personal Violence, altho' he gave the Church of Rome much greater Provocation. His Enemies, however, had Recourse to gross Calumny, in order to injure him ; the usual Engine of Persecutors, for annoying the Advocates of the Truth, when they cannot employ Violence. To destroy his Credit, and stir up the People against him, they propagated all Kinds of Slander respecting him ; some saying, that he was an Atheist, and had abjured his Conscience, after struggling with it for ten Years ; that he denied the Immortality of the Soul ; that he entertained low and carnal Ideas with respect to Paradise ; that he had composed Hymns in

\* Rapin, vol. i. p. 694. Mosh. Eccles. Hist. vol. iii. p. 232.



Favour of Drunkenness, and had vented a thousand blasphemous Expressions against the Scriptures, and particularly against the Writings of Moses; and they concluded the Catalogue of his Crimes, by declaring, that he did not believe a Word of what he preached. \*

From Germany, the Principles of the Reformers were transmitted into this Country, and spread very rapidly during the Reign of Henry the Eighth and of his Son, Edward the Sixth; but a most violent Attempt was made to stop their Progress by his Successor, Queen Mary, by a cruel Persecution, which she carried on under the Sanction of Parliament. No Distinction was made on this Occasion between the Young and the Aged, between Persons of either Sex, of the highest and meanest Condition. During her short Reign of five Years, two hundred and eighty-four Persons were burnt at the Stake; but the whole Number of those that suffered Death, including what perished in Prison by Famine and other Means, amounted to four hundred. In this Catalogue we find fifty-five Women and four Children, besides the venerable Names of Archbishop Cranmer and the Bishops Latimer, Ridley, and Hooper.

The Protestant Cause was supported and propagated during these violent Proceedings, by Books printed abroad in the English Language, and secretly conveyed into England. This occasioned a Proclamation, which enacted, “ that  
 “ any Person who might receive such Books,  
 “ and did not immediately throw them into the  
 “ Fire, without either reading or shewing them  
 “ to any Person, should be forthwith executed

\* Gen. Dict. Hist. and Crit. vol vii. p. 246 et seq.

“ by martial Law.” \* Books which teach Men the Truth, and instruct them in their Rights, are the Terror of Bigots, and fail not to be the principal Object of their Fury.

During the Persecution which raged in England, many of the English Protestants fled from their own Country into the Netherlands, where they met many others, both Ministers and Laymen, who had retired thither, from different Parts of Europe, from the same Cause. Compassion for their Sufferings attracted Attention: their Piety and Zeal, joined to irreproachable Manners, disposed Men to think favourably of their Sentiments; so that they made many Proselytes. To prevent the further Progress of this Heresy, Philip the Second, King of Spain, to whom the Netherlands were then subject, resolved to introduce the Inquisition. This Tribunal had been first instituted by Pope Innocent the Third, in the thirteenth Century, against the Albigenes, a small Body of People in the South of France, who still retained Something of primitive Christianity, and steadily opposed the Errors of the Church of Rome. The Officers of this Court, whose sole Business it was to detect and punish Heretics, were Men wholly dependant on the Roman Pontiffs. Wherever it was established, the Reputation, Fortunes, and Lives of Men were put into the Hands of merciless Priests, who gloried in the Rigour and Inhumanity of their Prosecutions, and who might punish merely on Suspicion, without producing an Accuser, or acquainting the Person accused with the Charge brought against him. This Court (which, under Pretence of serving Religion, exercised every Species of Injustice, Treachery, and Cruelty, that

\* Burnet, vol. ii. p. 363.

has ever been practised among Mankind) the King of Spain attempted to introduce into the Low Countries. \*

The Executions, Imprisonments, and Confiscations, which took place in consequence of erecting this odious Tribunal, inflamed the Minds of the Reformed to so great a Degree, that their Resentment could keep no Bounds. They proceeded to plunder the Churches of the Catholics, to break down the Images, and to commit other Acts of Violence. The King, resolved to support the Authority of the Inquisition, and to punish the Authors of these Violences, sent an Army of ten thousand Men, under the Command of the Duke of Alva, into the Provinces: But an Apprehension of the Severities which he was commissioned to inflict, drove from their Country an hundred thousand Persons, who (being some of the most industrious of the Inhabitants) transferred the Knowledge of Arts and Manufactures into the Countries which gave them Refuge.† The Fears of the People were but too well founded; for Alva boasted, on his retiring from the Government, that, during the five Years and a Half of his Administration, upwards of eighteen thousand Heretics had suffered by the Hand of the public Executioner, besides a much greater Number, which he had put to the Sword in the Towns which he had taken, and in the Field of Battle.‡ These Martyrs for the Truth endured their Sufferings with surprising Fortitude and Constancy. As they often made a strong Impression upon the

\* Fifty thousand Protestants had been put to Death in the Netherlands, under the Government of his Father Charles the Fifth, by the most moderate Computation. Grotius says, one hundred thousand. Watson's Hist. of Philip II. vol. i. p. 113, note.

† Idem, p. 294.

‡ Idem, vol. ii. p. 104.



Minds of the Spectators, by what they said to them at the Stake, a dreadful Engine was invented to prevent them from speaking; the Executioners first scorched their Tongues with a glowing Iron, and then screwed them into a Machine contrived on Purpose to produce the most excruciating Pain. \*

No Merit, however distinguished, can wash away the Stain of Heresy in the Apprehension of the Persecutor. Piety, Sincerity, Fortitude, Generosity, are all lost in this dreadful Crime. The Truth of this Observation is illustrated by the following Circumstance, which took place during these Persecutions in the Netherlands:—

“ Richard Willemson, an Anabaptist, being pursued, in the Depth of Winter, by an Officer of Justice, ran away upon the Ice, which not being very thick, it was with Difficulty that he got over it; but it broke under his Pursuer. Willemson, perceiving the Danger his Enemy was in, ran back, helped him out of the Water, and saved his Life at the Hazard of his own. The Officer, struck with his Generosity, would willingly have let him go, but was prevented by the Burgomaster, who came up that Instant; so that the Officer, fearing lest his Gratitude should endanger his own Life, carried the poor Man to Prison, and he was afterwards burnt alive. His Torments were inexpressible, the Inhabitants of Leerdam (at some Distance from Asperen, the Place of Execution) hearing him cry out above seventy Times, O Lord! O my God!” †

The more eminent Men are by their Virtues, their Rank, or their Learning, the more certainly

\* Abridgm. of Gerard Brandt's Hist. of the Reformat. in the Low Countries, vol. i. p. 119.

† Idem, p. 122.

are they exposed to the Fury of Persecutors. The celebrated William Tyndal had done unspeakable Service to the Cause of the Reformation in England, by first translating the Scriptures into the vulgar Tongue, and dispersing Copies of them in this Country. His Merit on this Account was too great to be overlooked; being apprehended at Antwerp, he was burnt for this Offence, after being first strangled.\* Tapper, Grand Inquisitor of the Low Countries, declared one Day, “ It is “ no great Matter whether those who suffer on a “ religious Account be guilty or not, provided “ we can but frighten the People by such Ex- “ amples. These cannot fail of Success, when “ Men eminent for their Learning, Wealth, “ Nobility, and high Preferments, are sacri- “ ficed.” †

The last Person, who was put to Death in the Netherlands, on a religious Account, was Ann Vanderhove, a Woman of forty Years of Age, who, refusing to retract her Opinions, was buried alive near Brussels. Being put in the Grave, her Persecutors first threw some Earth upon her Feet, and then by little and little over her Body quite to the Neck. Some Jesuits then asking her, whether she was willing to return to the Church, (giving her Hope of saving her Life by that Means) she cried out with amazing Courage, “ Those who “ seek to save their Life here, shall lose it here- “ after.” She continued imploring the Assistance of Heaven, till the Executioner covered her

\* Abridgm. of Gerard Brandt, vol. i. p. 51. The Enemies of Tyndal took away his Life after he had printed his Book, when the Mischief was done. The People of Birmingham have acted with more Policy, having destroyed or defaced a Manuscript Translation of a Part of the Bible, which Dr. Priestley was preparing for the Press.

† Idem, p. 90, 91.

Head with Earth, which he trod several Times with his Feet. The Groans of the poor Woman were heard under the Load, which filled the Spectators with Consternation and Horror. †

In these Instances, the Formality of a Trial was observed; a Charge was produced, Witnesses called to substantiate it, and Sentence passed. The Death of the Sufferer was the Penalty inflicted by some Law, however unjust, against the Effects of which he might find Means to defend himself; but in those I am about to relate, there is no Law, except the Will of the Persecutor; he is Accuser, Judge, and Executioner at the same Time. It is such Attacks as these that the Professors of the Truth have most Reason to dread, where every Individual is left to the uncontrouled Dominion of his own Passions, inflamed by private Resentment, or by Avarice, as well as by Differences in religious Opinions. In these Circumstances, there is no Species of Cruelty which the unhappy Victim has not Reason to fear. Men thus let loose assume the Characters of savage Beasts, and practise Barbarities which the Executioner of the Law would be ashamed or afraid to exercise before the Eye of the Public.

A violent Animosity having long subsisted in Ireland, between the two great religious Parties into which that Kingdom was divided, the Catholics at length came to the extraordinary Resolution of destroying all the Protestants. This Design was kept secret till the Day of Execution, which was fixed for the Twenty-third Day of October, 1641, the Feast of Ignatius Loyola, the Founder of the Order of Jesuits. After this Resolution had been taken, Visits of Kindness were never more frequently made by the Catholics to

† Abridgm. of Gerard Brandt, vol. i. p. 234, 235.



the Protestants, than just before the Time appointed for a general Massacre. This Artifice was employed the more effectually to conceal their Design.

The Protestants, upon the first Intimation of their Danger, flew to their Neighbours and Acquaintance for Protection, and put their Persons, their Wives, their Children, and all that they had, into their Power ; but religious Prejudices had destroyed all Respect to the Laws of Hospitality, and extinguished in their Breasts every Sentiment of Humanity. The unhappy Protestants were either betrayed into the Hands of their merciless Enemies, or perfidiously destroyed by those from whom they expected Protection.

The Methods by which they were put to Death were various. The Catholics, in some Places, burnt the Houses of the Protestants ; and then collecting together the miserable Inhabitants, under Pretence of giving them a safe Conduct, they fell upon them by the Road, and murdered them all. Having besieged the Town and Castle of Longford, and the Protestants having surrendered upon the Condition of being allowed Quarter, the Besiegers, the Instant the Town's People came out, fell upon them ; their Priest, as a Signal for the rest, first ripping open the Belly of the English Protestant Minister, after which his Followers soon hanged up the rest. Twelve hundred Protestants were driven, at different times, into the River Bann, chusing rather to perish in the Water than by the Swords of their Enemies. But this was the easiest Kind of Death which they suffered. Those who remained in their Houses were massacred, with Instances of Cruelty and Brutality which it would shock the Ear to relate. Many, after being robbed of all their other Property, were stripped of their Cloaths,

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and

and exposed naked to all the Inclemency of a severe Winter; in which Condition they quickly perished, after enduring great Misery. Nor did *they* experience a milder Fate, who, to avoid their Pursuers, fled to the Woods, being starved either with Hunger or Cold. Of those which attempted to fly for Safety into the Towns which had not yet fallen into the Hands of the Papists, many died upon the Road, through Cold, Fatigue, or Want of Necessaries; and many more after their Arrival, in Consequence of what they had previously suffered, or by crowding together in too great Numbers into one Place. By authentic Accounts of this Conspiracy, which have been published, it appears that one hundred and fifty thousand unarmed, unoffending Protestants, perished from these various Causes.

Nations in any Degree civilized have respected Genius, Learning, and Virtue, even in an Adversary; and distinguished Merit has saved its Possessor from Destruction, when he has fallen into the Hands of his Enemies: but such were the furious Passions with which the Irish Papists were transported, that neither the Virtue nor Learning of the excellent Dr. Bedell, Bishop of Kilmore, could afford him any Security. Not contented with exposing his Person to Injuries, which at his advanced Years were likely to prove fatal to him, and actually terminated in his Death, they destroyed every Thing from which he could derive private Comfort or public Consideration, if he should survive their Cruelties, an excellent Library of Books, and a large Collection of critical Expositions of Scripture, together with a great Number of other Manuscripts. In a few Moments they demolished the Labour of many Years, and occasioned a Loss to the World, the Extent of which it is impossible exactly to ascertain, but

but which those who were best acquainted with his Talents say, must have been very great.\*

Such are the pernicious Effects of Fanaticism produced by religious Animosity: whatever may be most highly prized by Individuals, or most useful to the Public, falls a Sacrifice to it.

The Romish Clergy were in the Secret of this detestable Conspiracy, and by Means of the unbounded Influence which they had over the Minds and Consciences of their People, had a great Share in accomplishing it. The Jesuits, Priests, and Friars, when the Day for the Execution of the Plot approached, recommended to God in their Prayers the Success of a great Design, much tending, as they said, to the Prosperity of the Kingdom and the Advancement of the Catholic Cause. They declared to the common People that the Protestants were Heretics, and ought not to be suffered to live any longer among them; that it was no more Sin to kill an Englishman (the Name which they gave to the Protestants), than to kill a Dog, and that relieving and protecting them was an unpardonable Crime. Pope Urban VIII. justified and approved of these enormous Barbarities, and publicly promised a plenary Indulgence for all their Sins, to those who had been engaged in them. §

\* See Bishop Burnet's Life of Bishop Bedell, London, 1685. — I do not find, that the Bishop of Kilmore had in his Possession a Collection of Philosophical Instruments, or an Elaboratory full of chymical Utensils. Had this been the Case, such valuable Articles of Property would not probably have been spared by these Irish Butchers, any more than they were on a late Occasion by the Birmingham Savages. The Labours of a Dissenting Minister in the Cause of Science have enabled the Champions of the Church of England to improve upon the Example of their Predecessors, the Papists.

§ For these Facts, relating to the Irish Massacre, see God's Goodness visible in our Deliverance from Popery, a Sermon, by Henry, Lord Bishop of Dromore, London, 1741.



A Scene not unlike this dreadful Catastrophe was exhibited in France, on the fatal Eve of St. Bartholomew, 1572. The Protestants, who were a numerous Body of People in that Kingdom, were obnoxious to the common People by Difference in religious Sentiments, and to the Court by their Opposition to its tyrannical Measures. But for some Time before this Period, every Artifice was employed to lull the Protestants into Security, and to conceal from them the Project which was formed for their Destruction. The King's Sister was married to the King of Navarre, who was regarded as the Head of the Protestants: the other Leaders of the Protestants were invited to Court, and treated with great Kindness and seeming Confidence. While they were here, and suspected no Danger, it was agreed, at a Cabinet Council, that on the Night preceding the twenty-fourth of August, the Feast of St. Bartholomew, upon the ringing of an Alarum Bell, about twelve o'Clock at Night, the Roman Catholics should illuminate their Windows, break into the Houses of the Protestants, and kill them without Mercy. This diabolical Resolution was punctually executed; Men, Women, and Children were promiscuously slaughtered: every Street was strewn with expiring Bodies. Some Priests, holding up a Dagger in one Hand and a Crucifix in the other, ran to the Chiefs of the Murderers, and exhorted them in the Name of God to spare neither Relations nor Friends. The King himself, Charles the Ninth, joined in the Massacre. When the flying Protestants ran to cross the River Seine, that they might get to a Place of Safety, the King seeing them from a Window that looked towards the River, fired upon them several Times with a Carabine, which had been loaded for that Purpose by one of his Pages: the Queen Mother,

Mother, Catharine de Medicis, likewise looking down from a Balcony, encouraged the Murderers, and laughed at the dying Groans of the Slaughtered. \*

This Massacre was not confined to Paris ; but the same dreadful Scene was exhibited in the Provinces, similar Orders having been sent to all the Governors, two or three only of whom refused to obey them ; so that, in a Week's Time, above one hundred thousand Protestants were cut to Pieces in different Parts of the Kingdom. The Court afterwards attempted to justify this Massacre by a Calumny, which however had not the smallest Foundation, and which no one believed ; accusing the Leaders of the Protestants of having formed a Conspiracy against the State. Notwithstanding the atrocious Nature of the Transaction, many of the Agents seem to have considered themselves as doing God Service in putting to Death the innocent Protestants. When Tavannes, Marshal of France, who had been very active in encouraging the Murderers, and rode about Paris on horseback for this Purpose, was lying upon his Death-Bed, and making a general Confession of his Sins, the Priest said to him with Surprise, " What ! no Mention of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew !" Tavannes replied, " I consider it as a meritorious Action, that will wash away my other Sins." †

The Sufferings of the Protestants in France did not end with the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. A Confederacy was formed in that Kingdom, under the Name of the Holy League, which had for its Object the Extirpation of Heresy,

\* See the Notes to Voltaire's *Henriade*, and his *Essay* on the civil Wars of France.

† *Henriade*, p. 43, note (aa).

and the Defence of the Roman Catholic Religion, which, they pretended, was in Danger from the Protestants. It is with Societies of Men as with Individuals: when they have committed great Crimes, they are haunted with the Fear of those Evils, which they are conscious they have merited; and having been guilty of one wicked Action, they have Recourse to another to defend the first. This League produced a bloody civil War, during the Course of which, Henry the Third, Successor to Charles the Ninth, was assassinated in his Tent, at the Instigation of the Preachers of Paris, by one James Clement, a young Dominican Friar, because he had taken Part with the Protestants against the League. The illustrious Henry the Fourth, who succeeded this Prince, experienced a similar Fate, being stabbed by Ravailac, a Friar, as he was riding in his Coach through the Streets of Paris, because (having once professed himself a Protestant) his Conversion to Popery was suspected to be insincere.

The last - mentioned Prince, who had been raised to the Throne by the Protestants, enacted the famous Edict of Nantes, by which he insured to them the free Exercise of their Religion. This Edict was considered as the fundamental Law of the State for near a Century, until the Year 1685, in the Reign of Lewis the Fourteenth; when their Power appearing too great in the Exertions they made for that Monarch, during the civil War which broke out in his Minority, he came to the Resolution of destroying them; it being represented to his Majesty, that, as the Protestants by their Weight and Influence had done him such signal Services, it was also in their Power to overturn the Government. To accomplish the Design which had been formed, a Variety



riety of Expedients were employed to rouse the Harred of the Papists against the Protestants, in order to prepare Mens Minds for the Scenes of Cruelty which were to follow. After these Arts had been successfully tried for several Years, the Mask was at length thrown off. Dragoons were quartered in the Houses of Protestants, where they were to live at Discretion, in order to prevent them from quitting their Homes, or carrying away their Effects. They afterwards fell upon their Persons, employing every Kind of Torture to compel them to abjure their Religion, not the least cruel of which was that of depriving Men of their Sleep for seven or eight Days together, by watching them the whole Time, and tormenting them in a thousand Ways. If any, after all, refused to turn Catholics, they were imprisoned in dark loathsome Dungeons, their Houses pulled down, and their Property laid waste. Those who attempted to escape were pursued into the Woods, and shot at like wild Beasts. Neither Age, nor Sex, nor Rank were spared in the Exercise of these Cruelties.

At the Head of these Dragoons, wherever they went, were the Bishops of the respective Dioceses, with Crouds of Missionaries, Priests, and Friars, who roused the Soldiers to perform their Duty, if any of them happened to be moved with Compassion. Having by these violent Methods produced an apparent Conformity to the Romish Worship, the Edict of Nantes was revoked, under the Pretence that it was no longer necessary.

By the new Edict the Protestant Churches were all to be demolished immediately: Assemblies for the Exercise of their Religion were forbidden: The Protestant Clergy were ordered to quit the Kingdom within a Fortnight after the Publication of the Edict, upon Pain of being sent to the Gallies:

lies : No Children were henceforth to be educated in the Protestant Religion ; and all that were born after this Time were to be sent to the Roman Catholic Churches, to be baptized into the Romish Faith. The Protestant Laity, their Wives and Children, were forbidden to quit the Kingdom, or to carry off their Effects, upon Pain of the Gallies to the Men, and Imprisonment and Confiscation of their Possessions to the Women. Protestants who remained in the Kingdom were assured that they should be undisturbed, provided they held no Meetings for the Exercise of their Religion.

Nothing could exceed the Strictness with which the severe Injunctions of this Edict were executed. Troops were stationed at all the frontier Towns, to prevent the Protestants from going out of the Kingdom. Those whom they discovered attempting their Escape were thrown into Prison, and many of them condemned to the Gallies. Yet, notwithstanding these Precautions, one hundred and fifty thousand Persons left France in one Year, from the Time of the Revocation of the Edict, and were afterwards followed by many more. These abandoned their Dwellings, their Inheritances, and all their other Effects, many of them their Wives and Children, to lead a Life of Poverty and Misery among Strangers, rather than abjure their Religion, or be denied the public Exercise of it. They fled to England, to Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, and even to America. To these Countries they carried the Arts and Manufactures of their native Country, although they were not allowed to remove their Property, and and greatly enriched them by their Skill and Industry. The Article of the Edict which promised the Protestants that remained in the Kingdom



dom Protection and Security, was only a Snare laid for the Credulous, to prevent them from contriving how to escape from France; for the Dragoons were quartered upon them, and they were treated in every Respect with the same Cruelty as before.

Lewis XIV. upon coming to the Throne, had confirmed the Edict of Nantes, and solemnly promised to maintain the Protestants in all their Rights; yet when he violated these Engagements, and authorised the Cruelties above mentioned, many of the Clergy applauded his Conduct, and declared that it was highly meritorious. The Bishop of Valence, speaking the Sentiments of the Romish Clergy, extols this Breach of Promise as a Greatness, and a Glory that exalts Lewis the Fourteenth above all his Predecessors, above Time, and consecrates his Memory to all Eternity.\*

It was not for a short Time that the Protestants endured the above recited Calamities. After suffering above thirty Years, they had the Mortification to find new Edicts enacted against them, which shewed that they were held in as much Detestation as ever. In the Year 1744, however, they began again to profess their Religion openly, and to hold public Assemblies; but this alarming the Romish Clergy, they used their utmost Endeavours to excite the Jealousy of the Court, and the Bigotry of the People against them. For this Purpose they had Recourse to Calumny. They charged the Protestant Ministers with exhorting their Auditors to rebel against the King, and with praying for Success to the British Arms during a

\* For an Account of the Sufferings of the Protestants at the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, see *Plaintes des Protestans, cruellement opprime dans le Royaume de France*, written by Mr. Claude, one of the exiled Ministers.



War with Great-Britain. The Priests represented the Protestants as ready to fall Sword-in Hand on all the Roman Catholics. In Consequence of these Representations, the Court was again induced to adopt violent Measures, the first Symptoms of which appeared in seizing the religious Books of the Protestants, and ordering them to be burnt. This Transaction was followed by the same Kind of Violences as have been mentioned before. On this, as well as other Occasions, the Protestant Ministers were the chief Object of Severity, who were either hanged or sent to the Gallies. The common Charge brought against them was their Disloyalty, notwithstanding the most peaceable Behaviour, and the most solemn Protestations to the contrary. Liberty of Conscience indeed they longed for; but they took no other Method to obtain it, than their Prayers and their Tears. In civil Concerns they paid the most unreserved Obedience to the Commands of the King, and were ready to sacrifice their Lives and Fortunes in the Service of the State. §

Such are a few of the Evils (for I have not enumerated one Half of what I could have mentioned) which have been brought upon Mankind by the persecuting Spirit of the Church of Rome. And can it be the Christian Religion which encourages Men to be guilty of such Outrages: To plunder, burn, or destroy the Property of innocent and virtuous Characters: To abuse their Persons, and take away their Lives by the most cruel Tortures, or to prolong their Existence only for the Sake of inflicting greater Misery? Are these the genuine Fruits of that Religion which professes to come from Heaven, and to have for its Author

§ See Popery always the same; exemplified in an authentic Account of the Persecution now carrying on against the Protestants in the South of France, London, 1746.

the God of Peace? So we might be tempted to conclude from observing those who have been most active in promoting them, for they have been produced by Christians from a professed Regard to their Religion, and esteemed meritorious Acts of Duty. They have been countenanced by the Ministers and Pastors of the Christian Church, who have been the principal Abettors and Promoters of Persecution in every Age. But if this be genuine Christianity, what becomes of its Claim to a divine Origin? A Religion which breathes such a Temper, and authorises such Practices, cannot be from Heaven, but must come from Hell, and be the Offspring of the Devil. It bears the evident Marks of the Disposition of that wicked One, who was a Murderer from the Beginning. But let not Men attribute to the Christian Religion what originates only in their own furious Passions; nor pretend to justify from the Scriptures what they openly condemn and reprobate. No two Things can be more opposite to each other, than the Maxims of Persecutors and the Language of the New Testament.

Blessed are the Meek, blessed are the Merciful, blessed are the Peace-Makers, blessed are ye when Men shall revile and persecute you, and say all Manner of Evil against you falsely for my Name Sake, is the Language of Christ: but Persecutors say, blessed are the Cruel, the Turbulent, the Intolerant, who require all Men to submit to their Opinions, and then punish them without Mercy for not acquiescing in their Tyranny; blessed are they who will say and do all Manner of Evil against those who profess what they believe to be Truth.

The genuine Spirit of Christianity, what all its Doctrines, Precepts, and Examples unite to recommend and enforce, is a Spirit of Benevolence and mutual Affection. It is with good Reason,



therefore, that Christ has declared, *by this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another*; \* i. e. this is the best Proof you can give that you understand and practice my Religion. But Persecutors make the Christian Religion to consist in Men's hating one another, and judge of a Person's Proficiency in the Temper of the Gospel by the Degree of Enmity which he discovers towards his Brethren.

The Conduct of Christ was full of Meekness and Condescension, of Benevolence and Mercy: and the leading Object of his preaching was to promote Meekness, Benevolence, and Mercy in others. Wherever he observed a contrary Temper in any of his Disciples, he immediately reprov'd them for it: thus when they would have called down Fire from Heaven to consume the Samaritans, who had refused to receive him, he rebuked them, saying, *ye know not what Manner of Spirit ye are of, for the Son of Man is not come to destroy Men's Lives, but to save them.* § And when Peter drew his Sword to defend his Master, he ordered him *put it up again into its Place.* †

The Apostles, after the Death of their Master, strictly followed so excellent an Example both in their Teaching and Practice. *Let Love,* says St. Paul, *be without Dissimulation; be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly Love, in Honour preferring one another. If it be possible, as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all Men.* † In his Epistle to the Galatians, he gives us a Catalogue of those Works of the Flesh which exclude Men from the Kingdom of Heaven: among which are, *Hatred, Variance, Emu-*

\* John xiii. 35.

§ Luke ix. 55, 56.

† Matt. xxvi. 52.

† Rom. xii. 9, 10, 18.



lations, *Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies*, (i. e. Sects arising from wicked Motives, or founded upon Antichristian Principles) *Envyings, and such like, of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in Time past, that they which do such Things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the Fruits of the Spirit are Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and Temperance, against which there is no Law.\** The same Writer tells us, that the only Faith in the Christian Religion, which is of any Value, is that which *worketh by Love.* || *Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Evil-speaking, and Malice, he orders us to put away, as Things that grieve the holy Spirit of God; and to be Followers of God, by walking in Love, even as Christ hath also loved us, and hath given himself for us. †* In his Directions to Timothy, he gives him this Summary of practical Religion: *the End of the Commandment is Charity out of a pure Heart and good Conscience, and Faith unfeigned. §* The Wisdom which is from above, is described by St. James as *pure, and peaceable, and gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of good Fruits, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy. But if we have Envyings and Strife in our Hearts, we have nothing to glory in, but we lie against the Truth; i. e. deny our Christian Profession. †*

How different is the Language of these Precepts from the Temper of persecuting Christians: Surely they never could have read the Scriptures, or attended to what they contain, when they acted in a Manner so directly opposite to their plainest Injunctions. How surprising is it, that the Mi-

\* Gal. v. 19, &c.

|| Gal. v. 6.

† Ephes. iv. 31. v. 1, 2.

§ 1 Tim. i. 5.

† James iii. 14, &c.

nisters of the Christian Religion, whose Business it is to study the Scriptures, and to inculcate its genuine Doctrines upon others, should be so inattentive to their Meaning, or so forgetful of their own Duty, as to become the Advocates of Persecution, and labour to promote it, always by their secret Insinuations, often by open Exertions.

In what Manner then are we to act towards those who practise or encourage Persecution, who, by doing so, depart so far from the Spirit of Christianity: Who are guilty of Calumny, Robbery, Murder, and of every Species of Cruelty, or instigate others to these Actions, under Pretence of serving the Interests of Religion? Shall we praise their Conduct as deserving the Name of a becoming Zeal for God? This would be to make ourselves Partners in their Guilt. To be silent only in such a Case is to be criminal. It betrays an Indifference to the Honour of Religion, which is deeply wounded by those who claim its Sanction to their wicked Actions, and an Unconcern about the Lives and Happiness of the human Race, which are sacrificed to the Fury of those who persecute. Every one who understands the true Spirit of the Christian Revelation, will behold these Violences, when committed under the sacred Name of Religion, with Indignation, and feel it to be his Duty, if he have an Opportunity, to expose them to the World in their genuine Colours; not as calculated to promote Peace and Union among Mankind, as they pretend, but Hatred and Dissention; not as originating in the mild Spirit of the Gospel of Christ, but in the malevolent Passions of the human Heart, as proceeding from that Wisdom which is from beneath, and which St. James tells us is earthly, sensual, devilish. By imputing to Men the Guilt of their own Actions we shall probably make them angry,  
and



and may provoke them to renew against ourselves those Evils, which they have been unjustly inflicting upon others; it may appear, therefore, to be the Part of Prudence to pass over their Conduct without Notice. But how shall they be made sensible of their Faults, unless they are condemned? How can they be restrained from committing the like Offences a second Time, if the Fear of Shame, or of a general Odium, be not employed for that Purpose? Or how can others be deterred from following their Example, if it be not shewn to be criminal? To suffer Men to be guilty of all Kinds of Violence, without public Censure, through Fear of incurring their Displeasure, is to abandon the World to the uncontrouled Tyranny of the Wicked, for the Sake of our own personal Security. It is they who practise, not they who condemn Persecution, who are to be regarded as the Disturbers of the public Peace: the Exertions of the latter are the Effort of Virtue against Vice, of Justice against Oppression, of a generous Philanthropy, in Behalf of the Rights and Happiness of the human Race, in Opposition to those who have leagued together to destroy them. Such Endeavours deserve to be commended and encouraged by all the Friends of Peace, Virtue, and Religion. The Facts exhibited in this Discourse are sufficient to shew, that we cannot be too watchful in guarding Mankind against the odious Spirit of Persecution, nor express ourselves too strongly of its evil Tendency. Those who regard it as a light Evil, undeserving of Notice, are utter Strangers to the History of the Christian Church. The Genius of Persecution is a savage Monster that has devoured Millions of the human Race; if but the Print of his Feet are seen again, it is Time to sound the Alarm, and to call upon all who value  
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the Peace of Society, and the Credit of the Christian Religion, to unite their Endeavours for his Destruction; and blessed is that Hand which God shall furnish with Strength to give him a deadly wound. To behold his Ravages upon others with Unconcern, and not to attempt to stop them, least we should irritate him to attack ourselves, discovers a Degree of Timidity and Weakness, which is not only highly dishonourable, but which may likewise prove fatal to us, and become the Cause of those Evils we are endeavouring to avert; for as this Monster possesses not a very discerning Spirit, if he be suffered to roam without Molestation, he may at Length vent his Fury upon those, who have studied to avoid Provocation by the most pusillanimous Submission.

Our next Inquiry is, how we ought to behave towards the Descendants of those who were the Authors of these Calamities, the Roman Catholics of the present Day. Not, surely, by inflicting upon them the Evils which their Ancestors occasioned: By injuring them in their Persons or Property, or depriving them of any of their civil Rights: That would be to return Evil for Evil, which the Precepts of the Christian Religion prohibit; and would be to act contrary to the Principle of the equitable Law delivered in the Text to the Jews, which forbids to punish the Children for the Sins of their Fathers. Guilt is a personal Thing, which cannot be transferred from one to another. Every one is answerable for his own Offences alone, and not for the Offences of those over whom he has no Influence, whether they be his Ancestors or Descendants. For this Reason, all those Laws which render any Class of Citizens subject to severe Penalties from one Generation to another, for the Crimes of their Predecessors, are unjust: since they proceed upon this Principle, that

that the Sentiments and Dispositions of the Mind are hereditary, descending from Father to Son, and that they must remain unchangeable in every Succession of Men; a Supposition which is evidently contradicted both by Experience and Observation. Where Individuals or a Body of People have been guilty of any Crime, let them be punished for it; but let not that Punishment extend to their Children, who may be entirely innocent. The Propriety of this Limitation is rendered evident in the Case of the Roman Catholics of this Kingdom, who now renounce many of the Principles, and condemn the persecuting Conduct of their Ancestors. But were they still to retain the Principles of their Forefathers, and to believe it to be their Duty, whenever they had Opportunity, to oppress and injure those who differ from them in religious Sentiments, no other Restraint upon them would be necessary than to deprive them of the Power of doing Mischief, by carrying their Principles into Effect. To do any Thing farther than this, would be to punish them for their Opinions, which are not in their own Power, and come not within the Jurisdiction of any human Tribunal. They are the Actions of Men, and not their Sentiments, political or religious, which are the proper Objects of civil Laws. Wherever the State assumes to itself an Authority to examine into the private Creed of its Members, and to grant or withhold civil Privileges, according to the Ideas which may be formed of their good or evil Tendency, it goes out of its Province, and opens a wide Door to Injustice and Oppression: for every one thinks his own Opinions safe, and those of the Persons who differ from him dangerous.

Against granting the free Exercise of their Religion to Roman Catholics, it has been al-  
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ledged, that they not only profess Subjection to a foreign Prince, the Pope, and acknowledge his Authority to absolve them from their Allegiance, and from every other Obligation by which they may be bound to obey the supreme Power in this Country, but likewise that they have been in the Habit of acting upon this Principle, keeping no Faith with Heretics, and violating the most solemn Ties of moral Duty, wherever they apprehended the Wishes of the Pope, or the Interests of their Religion, could be promoted thereby; a Conduct which is wholly inconsistent with the Safety of the Community, and renders them unworthy of the common Rights of Subjects.

To this it may be answered, that whenever Papists have thus offended, the whole Force of the Law ought to have been directed against the Delinquents. But that if the Roman Catholics of the present Day renounce all Subjection to the Pope of Rome in civil Concerns; if they deny his Authority to absolve them from any moral Obligation, and are ready to give the same Security for their peaceable Behaviour, as is required from other Subjects; no good Reason can be assigned why they should not enjoy equal Privileges.\* That they hold many corrupt and absurd religious Tenets cannot affect their Claim to any civil Right.

If any Person should be so unreasonable as to doubt the Sincerity of these solemn Declarations, and to believe that they are only made from a Regard to present Security or Convenience, and that if an Opportunity offered of promoting the

\* See the Petition and Protestation of the English Catholic Dissenters to the House of Commons, in the N. Ann. Reg. for 1789, which was signed by six Bishops, above two hundred Clergymen, and fifteen hundred Laymen; a Number which includes every respectable Name among the Catholics of this Country.



Interests of Popery by violating them, they would no longer be esteemed binding : The Catholics of this Country can appeal to the Tenor of their past Conduct, during many Years, for the sacred Regard paid to an Oath, or solemn Declaration, by the Members of their Community; since they have been prevented hereby, for more than a Century, from taking their Seats in either House of Parliament, as well as from holding many honourable and lucrative Posts under Government; Situations which might afford them the Prospect of serving their Cause.

But if neither their present Protestations nor past Conduct are sufficient to give Satisfaction, let him look to a neighbouring Kingdom : He will there behold a bright Ray of Liberality illuminating the dark Genius of Popery, and rendering it mild and beneficent; he will there behold the Persecutors of Protestants become their Guardians; the inveterate Enemies of the Rights of Conscience become their zealous Advocates; the Representatives of a great People, professedly Roman Catholics, laying it down as a fundamental Maxim of every just Government, that no Man shall be molested for his Opinions, even such as are religious; and that all Citizens, being equal in the Eye of the Law, are equally admissible to public Honour, Places, and Offices, according to their Capacity, and without any other Distinction but that of their Virtue or their Talents. In the Conduct of this enlightened Nation, we have a Pledge and Security for the liberal Spirit of Members of the same religious Communion at Home.

For these Reasons, the Law lately passed in their Favour, repealing former sanguinary Laws, and placing them nearly upon the same Footing as the Protestant Dissenters, in respect to the Exercise of their Religion, was a just and equita-

ble Measure : The only Thing to be lamented is, that the Relief granted did not extend so far as the Rights of Conscience and the Principles of universal Liberty required. § However, what has

§ The Act of Parliament, after granting to Roman Catholics Liberty to instruct Youth as Tutors and Schoolmasters, contains an Exception, which takes away, in a great Measure, the Benefit of the Relief which appears to be given to Papists, and at the same Time lays Protestants under an unnecessary and injurious Restraint : for it declares, *That no Schoolmaster professing the Roman Catholic Religion, shall receive into his School, for Education, the Child of any Protestant Father* ; so that he is still liable to all the Penalties of former Laws against Papists, and particularly to the dreadful Penalty of perpetual Imprisonment, if he presume to teach a Protestant Child the necessary Elements of Knowledge (Blackf. vol. iv. chap. iv. p. 55), i. e. if he perform a useful and very important Office in Society ; and " it is left in the Breast of every merciless Bigot," to use the Words of Judge Blackstone, " to drag down the Vengeance of this Law upon a meritorious Subject." But it is not merely on Account of the Severity of the Penalty that the Law is unjust. To confine Roman Catholics to the Instruction of their own Children, is almost to prohibit them from having any Schoolmasters of their own ; for Roman Catholics are so thinly scattered, that a Schoolmaster of that Persuasion will not be able to obtain a Subsistence by his Employment, except in large Towns, and Parents will be compelled to send their Children to be educated by Protestants, if they receive any Education at all. It is an Injury to Protestants, because it prevents them from availing themselves of the Talents of Roman Catholic Schoolmasters, whenever they are better qualified for their Office than Persons of the same Profession in the Establishment, or among the other Dissenters. If it be in itself unjust for the Members of one Communion, with the Consent of the Parents, to educate a Child belonging to another, all Parties should have been laid under the same Restraint, and a Member of the Church of England made liable to the Penalty of perpetual Imprisonment, for receiving into his School the Child of a Papist. But the Truth is, that such Restraints are equally unnecessary in every Case ; for if a Schoolmaster, instead of teaching his Boys Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, or the Knowledge of ancient and modern Languages, were inclined so far to depart from his Province as to inculcate his own peculiar Sentiments in Religion, the Alarm he would find excited hereby among the Friends of the Children would be a sufficient Check upon him. Should it be said, that it was intended in this Instance only to prevent Catholics from educating the Children of the Poor, *gratis*, and from recommending their Religion to that Class of People by an Act of Beneficence, it may be answered, that this is an Injury to the Poor, who would not be indebted to Papists for the Instruction of their Children, if Protestants would bestow upon them the same Benefit. This Provision of the Bill, although it infringes so much upon the Rights of Individuals, will not, after all, answer the Purposes of those by whom it was suggested. In order to be effectual, the Clause should



has been now done may prepare the Way for something better at a future Period. In the

should have prohibited Papists, *under the Penalty of perpetual Imprisonment*, from performing any kind Office for a Protestant. The Church of England, we might then presume, would be in no Danger of losing any of its Members by a Conversion to Popery. But to prohibit Charity in one Form only, leaves the Persons laid under this Restraint so much the more to expend in another. This Part of the Act of Parliament could not proceed from the liberal Temper of a British House of Commons, or from the Lay Lords in the Upper House, but must have been dictated by the narrow Spirit or groundless Fears of some of the Bishops or Clergy. It corresponds sufficiently with their Conduct in other Instances: for those Places, which have not the Benefit of those excellent Institutions for instructing the Poor, *Sunday-Schools*, owe it principally to the want of Encouragement or Opposition from the Clergy; which is the more surprising, as the Children are instructed by Churchmen, and taught to attend their own Churches. Thus, many of the Clergy of this Country are become, by their Actions at least, the Supporters of the old Popish Maxim, that the common People are to be kept in Ignorance, lest they should become too wise for a blind Submission to their spiritual Guides; they will therefore neither instruct them themselves, nor suffer those who are willing to do it to afford them this Advantage.

But there is another Limitation relating to this Subject in the Statute, which is more extraordinary than the preceding: "Provided always, that no Person professing the Roman Catholic Religion shall obtain or hold the Masterhip of any College or School of Royal Foundation, or of any other endowed College or School for the Education of Youth, *or shall keep a School in either of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.*" I refer to the last Clause, printed in Italics. Had the Act prohibited Papists from keeping a School at Birmingham, or in some other of our manufacturing Towns, where the Inhabitants so nearly resemble Papists of former Times in Ignorance and Bigotry, there might appear to be some Propriety and Wisdom in the Precaution; such Men, with a very little Tuition, would find the Transition from the Church of England to the Church of Rome perfectly easy. But what Danger could be supposed to arise to the Church from a Roman Catholic School in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, where all the Learning of the Church of England is concentrated, is what I cannot comprehend.

Such is the Effect of this panic Fear for the Safety of the Church, religious Ordinances are to be prostituted, the Rights of civil Society to be withheld from a numerous Class of Citizens, the Diffusion of Knowledge to be restrained and proscribed, to insure its Security. To say nothing of burning Places of Worship, and private Houses, and threatening Men with Death, who venture to dissent from it. Must not the Foundations of a Church be unsound, for which its Friends are so much alarmed, and which they take such Means to defend? Or if it be the Church of Christ, and founded upon a Rock, must not their Fears be very ridiculous?

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mean Time it will be earnestly desired by every Friend to religious Liberty, that this Act of the Legislature, which gives to Catholics what they are entitled to in a much greater Extent, may be attended by none of those popular Violences which set the Metropolis in Flames in the Year 1780, and which have lately been renewed against the Protestant Dissenters. It will be disgraceful indeed to suffer Papists to exceed us in Liberality; to behold the Members of the Church of Rome acknowledging the Right of Protestants to the free Exercise of their Religion; but Protestants refusing to Catholics, and even to fellow Protestants, an imperfect Toleration. May such Bigotry and Fanaticism never be again the Reproach of this Country in these enlightened Times.

To prevent these, and similar Mischiefs, let every one labour to extirpate from the Minds of Men all the remaining Seeds of religious Animosity and Intolerance, in whatever Form they discover themselves; and sow in their Place the Principles of mutual Love, of Christian Candour and Forbearance in respect to all Subjects, about which the Disciples of Jesus differ.

F I N I S.

